

# **DNREC Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police kick off National Safe Boating Week May 18-24**

***Partnership announced to provide loaner life jackets to boaters***

**DOVER** – With the 2019 summer season and ideal weather ahead, many boaters will soon be heading out on the water. DNREC's Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police Office of Boating Safety & Education encourages boaters to practice safe boating, not just during National Safe Boating Week from May 18-24 – but throughout the year.

Delaware, which consistently has one of the lowest boating accident rates in the country, had 36 reported boating accidents and two fatalities last year. This year, there have been two reported boating accidents to date and no related fatalities in the state.

Statistics support the vital role of wearing life jackets in keeping boaters safe. In 2017, the most recent year for which statistics are available, 76 percent of all boating-related fatalities nationwide were drowning victims, with 84.5 percent of those victims not wearing life jackets, according to the U.S. Coast Guard.

To further promote boaters to wear life jackets, Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police will be kicking off a Life Jacket Loaner Program in partnership with Sea Tow Foundation, starting May 20. As an alternative to ending someone's voyage on Delaware waterways when found to not have the required life jackets, officers will have loaner life jackets in sizes from Infant to Adult XL onboard their patrol vessels for the public

to borrow and return.

“We’re excited to partner with the Sea Tow Foundation to make this Life Jacket Loaner Program available to boaters in our area,” said Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police Chief Drew Aydelotte. “This will help ensure that boaters of all ages have proper-fitting life jackets, which will go a long way toward keeping people safe while they’re out enjoying the beautiful waterways of Delaware.”

For more information, including Delaware’s boating safety course schedule and the online Delaware Boating Handbook, click [Delaware Boating Safety](#), or contact Boating Safety & Education Coordinator Sgt. Brooke Mitchell at 302-739-9913 or email [brooke.mitchell@delaware.gov](mailto:brooke.mitchell@delaware.gov).

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